

SUB-COMMITTEE B
DENSITY, HOUSING MIX, WORKFORCE HOUSING
Bob Klancher, Chairman
Nancy Hsu
John Elgin
Staff Support: John Merrithew

SUMMARY OF JUNE 12, 2006 MEETING

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Klancher reported on his meeting with the Housing Advisory Board's Work Force Housing Subcommittee. The Housing subcommittee will be joining the Commission on June 22. A copy of a consultant presentation on the demand for workforce housing is in the Commission's June 9, 2006 packet. A preliminary draft of the Housing Report is to be emailed to the Sub-Committee by Mr. Klancher.

DISCUSSION: LINKAGES

The Sub-Committee discussed the issues associated with a policy that attempts to link housing to employment. Linking is a good policy but difficult to implement. The variables of employment location and the different types of employment would make it difficult to accomplish an accurate match of housing and employment. Mix of units and employment has to be right to successfully allow people to live close to work.

Other discussion points included:

Employment is regional and linkage should not look only at employment in Loudoun. Further, linkage should also look at secondary and tertiary employment.

The Committee discussed a specific linkage proposal that would rely on an applicant's phasing plan, submitted with a rezoning, and showing high and low build out schedules and cash flow projections. The policy would recommend that the applicant either build the employment floor area or pay the equivalent tax revenue if the buildings were not built within the time frames outlined in the applicant's phasing analysis. This goes beyond current General Plan policy by trying to define how to implement the policy.

The Committee also considered that the regional economy in Washington is tied to the Federal government. As long as the government continues to grow so will the regional employment picture and therefore a county linkage policy is not necessary. It was noted that while there is a significant land area dedicated to employment uses, the County has lost businesses to other localities because couldn't find a space in Loudoun. A linkage could incentivize the provision of employment space.

The idea of linking new housing to the amount of affordable or workforce housing was discussed as an alternative linkage policy. It was suggested that developers not be able to buy out of affordable housing. Salaries are not going up at the same rate as housing cost and the County must accommodate people who cannot afford market rates.

The principle issues associated with an employment – housing linkage is that a formula approach may not work. A formula approach would be difficult to define. Maintaining a linkage policy would allow a case by case decision on the appropriate linkage and provide flexibility based on other factors such as project location, trends in business development (localized businesses) and county or regional economic balance.

The Sub-Committee clarified the linkage is countywide employment. It was not anticipated that the Transition area would provide its own housing jobs balance.

DISCUSSION: WORKFORCE HOUSING/AFFORDABLE HOUSING

It was suggested that the County require new housing to provide housing affordable to those earning the average income in the county. For example developers could build all housing they want as long as 80 % of the units do not exceed the price point affordable by people earning the County's average salary. 10% of the units could sell above and 10% sell below the target price point.

It was acknowledged that County would have to be an active partner, helping to reduce the cost of development and possibly abating capital facility expectations. Some proposals may require State enabling legislation.

DISCUSSION: COMMUNITY DESIGN

The transition area since 1991 was expected to be predominantly residential. It was not intended to compete with Keynote areas.

The Committee reviewed the Commission's current density proposal: 4 units per acre in Upper broad Run and 3 units per acre in Upper Foley with higher densities at major intersections. It was generally agreed that the higher density areas were not a result of density averaging. Key intersections and around key facilities such as the proposed hospital and university need higher supporting densities.

Staff is to examine the impact of higher densities at interchanges on the function and capacity of the intersection or interchange.

The Committee discussed how to equitably split the density among property owners. It was noted that under current development proposals and existing development, the resulting overall density is 2.6 units per acre. A map illustrating

that point was submitted from the audience. The suggestion was that very little land is not already under subdivision or rezoning consideration.

Staff indicated support for 3 and 4 du/ac densities and higher densities in strategic areas and raised the issue of setting densities and then not achieving those densities as has happened in Dulles North. The low density development pattern used up the land more quickly and resulted in more expensive housing than envisioned by Plan policy.

The Committee suggested that community design move away from traditional suburban patterns and support increased clustering of houses and more open space. This fulfills the "transitioning" concept of the area. The Committee noted conventional homes are so large they are too close together in the small lot situation design concept. The Committee suggested using natural features in a high quality way rather than the haphazard alignment of lots to create clusters and distinct communities.

NEXT STEPS

For the June 22 Committee meeting, staff was asked to coordinate a presentation by the consultant who prepared the County Housing Study. The Committee also requested a consolidated map of rezoning projects showing the roads, green spaces, etc. (Attachments 2A).